

## ***This Week in Congress***

*February 16, 2010*

Dear Friend,

Welcome to “This Week in Congress.” The House of Representatives did not meet this week due to back-to-back snowstorms that left more than two feet of snow covering Washington, D.C. Combined with other snowstorms this season, this week’s snow broke the area’s all-time record for snowfall set in 1898-1899. More than 54 inches of snow have fallen on the nation’s capital so far this season. While the snowstorms prevented Congress from meeting, it allowed me to visit with Kansans across our state. Congress remains out of session until Monday, February 22, in observance of the President’s Day holiday.

## **Promoting Civic Engagement with Students**

Civic engagement is an important trait to foster in young people. This week, I spoke to students at Benedictine College in Atchison, Central Christian College of Kansas in McPherson and

Elyria Christian School in McPherson about the importance of being active in their communities. I was encouraged to see students are following current events and understand that decisions made today will affect their future. It is my hope that these conversations further encourage Kansas students to become active in public affairs.

**Benedictine College:** On Tuesday, I visited the campus of Benedictine College, a Catholic, liberal arts college with an enrollment of almost 1,900 students. While on campus, I spoke to students studying international finance, strategic management and American government about the federal government's debt and how Americans, especially young Americans, will be affected by it. Each person in the U.S. now owes more than \$40,000 to pay off our nation's debt. Spending today will be paid for by future generations and I worry that our children and grandchildren will be left with a lower standard of living if spending is not cut. We also discussed the Federal Reserve Transparency Act. I am a sponsor of this legislation that would require an audit of the Federal Reserve System. Such a review is necessary to make sure safeguards are in place to protect taxpayers. Thanks to Dr. Don Hoy, Dave Greenens and Michael King for hosting me.

**Central Christian College of Kansas:** I welcomed the new president of Central Christian College (CCC) of Kansas, Hal Hoxie, back to Kansas on Wednesday. President Hoxie graduated from CCC in 1979 and recently moved back to Kansas after being named the 14th president of the college. President Hoxie comes to CCC after serving at the Pentagon, in Washington, D.C. Following our meeting, I spoke to students in Dr. Lenny Favara's social psychology class. I appreciated the chance to discuss health care reform, cap and trade legislation and the negative consequences of our country's increasing debt. Thanks to President Hoxie and Dr. Favara for their hospitality.

**Elyria Christian School:** Elyria Christian School was founded in 1982 by a small group of families who wanted spiritual and character development to be part of their children's

educational experience. On Wednesday, I spoke with students about my role as a representative, my continuing dissatisfaction with No Child Left Behind and my support of magnet and charter schools. I also answered questions about the challenges facing our nation. Thanks to Joanna Looney, Abe Godfrey and School Administrator Rick Roberts for their hospitality. Thank you as well to Sandy Weicht for the kind invitation.

[Click here](#)

to view a photo from my visit.

## **Discussing Financial Regulation with Community Bankers**

As our nation works its way out of the recession, it is important to remember that community banks were not the cause of the financial crisis that led to our current situation. On Monday, I met with members of the Community Bankers Association of Kansas in Topeka to talk about economic issues and financial regulation. Increased financial regulations have restricted the amount of credit community banks can lend to Kansas businesses. Without credit, Kansas businesses will have a much harder time expanding and hiring new employees—further slowing economic recovery.

When considering financial overhaul legislation, Congress must be careful not to lump these community banks, which are a strong part of the Kansas economy, in with the large Wall Street firms. In addition, regulators need to balance consumer protection with easier lending requirements. Thanks to Chairman Gary Kay and President and CEO Shawn Mitchell for their hospitality.

## **Beef Production is Important to Kansas**

On Thursday, I met with Matt Teagarden and Rich McKee of the Kansas Livestock Association (KLA) in Topeka to discuss issues important to the Kansas cattle industry. During the meeting, we talked about Taiwan's decision to block imports of U.S. ground beef and beef offal products. I recently wrote the president of Taiwan's parliament to encourage the Taiwanese government to meet the terms of the bilateral agreement it signed last October and fully-open its market to U.S. beef. American beef is the safest, highest quality beef in the world and Taiwan must live up to its trade obligations. Failure to do so will jeopardize future trade agreements and hurts the Kansas beef industry, which accounts for more than \$6 billion in annual revenue. [Click here](#) to learn more about my efforts to encourage Taiwan to open its market to U.S. beef.

We also discussed USDA's recent decision to change its policy on animal identification. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack recently announced USDA would try to implement a more flexible program to only identify animals in interstate commerce, work closer with the states, encourage use of lower-cost technology, strengthen confidentiality and implement the new approach through federal regulations. It is positive that USDA is looking at a more flexible, lower-cost approach to animal disease traceability, but it is still unclear how USDA will define animals in interstate commerce and what method it will use to identify those animals. Thanks to Matt, Rich and the folks at KLA for working hard on behalf of the cattle industry in our state.

## **Kansas Communities Rely on Quality Broadcasting**

I met with members of the Kansas Association of Broadcasters on Thursday at WIBW Radio in Topeka to discuss legislation before Congress, including the performance tax, that would affect local broadcasters. The proposed performance tax would require broadcasters to pay a fee each time they play a song on air. While I believe artists should be fairly compensated for their work, the performance tax unfairly taxes radio stations and diminishes the ability of local broadcasters to provide news, weather and entertainment programs that are essential to many Kansas communities. I am a sponsor of the Local Radio Freedom Act, which declares that Congress should not impose any new performance fee, tax, royalty or other charge on broadcast content. Thanks to Kansas Association of Broadcasters President Kent Cornish, WIBW Radio General Manager Larry Riggins and 106.9 Country Legends General Manager Jim Allan for meeting with me.

### **K-State Research Program Has Many Potential Applications**

On Thursday, I had the opportunity to tour the Unmanned Aircraft Systems Lab at Kansas State University at Salina. K-State and its faculty and students are at the forefront of this technology, as few other schools offer courses in the field of unmanned systems. I was able to see a range of vehicles from the larger ones that can carry significant cargo down to small helicopters outfitted in the Advanced Avionics Miniaturization Lab. Unmanned aerial vehicles and the research being done at KSU have many potential applications, including disaster relief, emergency response and airport safety. Thanks to Dean Dennis Kuhlman, Josh Brungardt, Kurt Barnhart and Nathan Maresch for showing me the impressive facilities. [Click here](#) to view a photo from my visit.

## **Attending Civic Clubs**

Citizens and local leaders meet at civic clubs across our state to work together on issues important in their communities. This week, I attended civic club meetings in Hays and Atchison.

**Hays Rotary Club:** On Monday, I attended the Hays Rotary Club, of which I am a member. The meeting featured the club's annual Valentine's Day music program. I enjoyed the entertainment provided by Kathy Dreiling-Amrein, Ralph Thummel and Kay Werth. During the meeting, the club also discussed its fundraising efforts for Haiti relief. Thank you to President Tom Meis for his leadership of the club.

**Atchison Kiwanis Club:** I attended the Atchison Kiwanis Club meeting on Tuesday and visited with club members about the latest legislative news from our nation's capital. In all parts of our state, Kansans remain concerned about out-of-control government spending and health care reform. Thanks to David Myers, club president, for his hospitality.

## **Speaking with the Manhattan Area Chamber of Commerce**

I spoke to members of the Manhattan Area Chamber of Commerce on Friday during their breakfast at the Manhattan Country Club. I shared my thoughts about what is happening in Washington, D.C., and took questions about Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) levy recertification and health care reform. I also addressed members' concerns about the direction of our country. It was good to visit with folks and get an update on the Chamber's activities following its 85th annual meeting last Friday. Thanks to Frank Beer for the kind introduction and to Linda Weis, Lyle Butler and Carol Moore for their hospitality. [Click here](#) to view a photo from the event.

### **Highland Community College Prepares Students for Success**

For more than a century, Highland Community College (HCC) in Highland has been providing Kansans access to affordable higher education. This week, I toured HCC, the first college in Kansas, with President David Reist to see how the college serves its students. As a member of the Community College Caucus and the Career and Technical Education Caucus, it was beneficial to learn more about how HCC faculty and coursework prepare students for success. Thanks to President Reist and Dr. Craig Mosher for taking time to meet with me.

### **Cheering K-State to Victory**

The Kansas State Wildcats men's basketball team is enjoying a successful season under the leadership of Head Coach Frank Martin. K-State is currently ranked 7th in the nation—the team's highest ranking since 1962. On Saturday, I attended the Kansas State men's basketball game against the University of Colorado at Bramlage Coliseum in Manhattan to cheer the Wildcats to victory. KSU won the game 68 to 51. Congratulations to the team on another victory and to the fans for creating a great atmosphere to support the team. Thanks to President Kirk Schulz and Athletic Director John Currie for their company during the game.

### **Sharing a Spaghetti Dinner at Immaculate Heart of Mary in Hays**

My wife, Robba, and I attended a spaghetti dinner Sunday at Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church in Hays. The spaghetti dinner is an annual fundraiser for the parish's Catholic Youth Organization (CYO), which helps high school students grow in their faith and build healthy relationships with others. It was good to see many friends supporting this youth group. Thanks to CYO members and Youth Director Rick Binder for their hospitality.

### **Internship Deadline Approaching**

Kansans interested in serving as a congressional intern in my office have until Friday, March 5, 2010 to submit applications. Internships are available in my Washington, D.C., Hays,



Hutchinson and Salina offices for the summer 2010 term. I served as an intern when I was a college student and learned valuable skills. Similar opportunities to learn about our government and public service and to develop writing and communication skills are available for young Kansans today. [Click here](#) for more information about internships and to learn how to apply.

## In the Office

Selahattin Aydin of Lenexa was in with the Turquoise Council of Americans and Eurasians to talk about current events in Turkey.

Very truly yours,

Jerry